

THE AMERICAN ROLE

great American democracy was giving weight to the guarantee of Iranian independence. This pledge was a unique feature of American diplomacy and was applied for the first time to an Asiatic country. And the fact that the Atlantic Charter was mentioned in the declaration as a valid document promised that the noble war aims of the West had not been abandoned. The Iranian press did not hide its satisfaction, and although gratitude was expressed toward all the Big Three, there was no doubt that the United States was the chief beneficiary of these kind feelings.

Finally, with reference to propaganda proper, one must not forget that objectively there existed in Iran a very favorable mental climate for the promotion of American ideals and interests. The United States was traditionally regarded as a disinterested and friendly country, anxious to help rather than to exploit. This opinion was due to many factors, not the least of which was the activity of American Presbyterian missions in Iran. These missions created uncontestable good will and respect. By tacit agreement with the British the American missions had operated more in the northern provinces, whereas the British missions had entrenched themselves in the south. This gave the Americans the additional advantage of spreading the light of their civilization in regions traditionally threatened by Russian imperialism.

Other proofs of the confidence placed in the United States were not lacking. Many Iranians, uncertain of the future of their country, emigrated to the United States during the war or toward the end of it. In September, 1945, the American Consulate in Teheran was besieged by large numbers of students seeking

admittance to American universities. There was a basic readiness to trust the United States. What was needed in return was to assure the Iranians that America with her good will, power, and resources would not betray this trust, even if it meant a rebuke to a powerful Ally.

Before concluding this chapter a few remarks on the position of the American Embassy in Teheran may be in order. Until the Teheran Conference of November, 1943, the American diplomatic mission had the rank of a legation but as a result of the Conference it was raised to the status of an embassy. As a legation it was headed